



HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE NEWS RELEASE

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IIAH HONORS FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

The Independent Insurance Agents of Houston (IIAH) announced that HFD Dispatchers Senior Captain Richard Chandler and Captain Mark Griffiths as the Firefighter of the Year from several Houston firefighter finalists during and luncheon at the Crowned Plaza Brook hollow, January 10, 2008.

This is the 30th year IIAH has worked in conjunction with HFD to recognize the commitment of firefighters and paramedics who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in emergency situations. The 2007 recipients, Chandler and Griffiths were presented with a plaque and \$500.

The two captains were recognized for their efforts during the mid-rise fire at 9343 N. Loop East on March 28, 2007.

Fire Alarm Dispatch is far different then any other form of dispatching. Fire Alarm Dispatchers are far more aware of the level of urgency and equipment required to complete a given assignment. Emergency incidents do not allow firefighters the luxury of time. The officer's in charge are often forced to make life or death decisions "Right Now!" Captain Eric Abbt's "May Day", along with his gasping breaths for fresh air, was heard by an entire city. The Communications Officers and OEC Call Takers were on the telephone with civilians, unable to escape the inferno, up to their last breath. There cannot be many situations more gut wrenching then those. Yet, through it all, we hear the calm voice of the Communications Officer on the radio. That calm voice is often the very thing that helps a victim survive a seemingly hopeless situation.

The other finalist included:

Engineer Operator Al Allnutt for responding to a boat fire in Kemah while on vacation. He helped to rescue a fellow firefighter who he had worked with at HFD. This injured firefighter suffered burns to more than 85% of his body.

Engineer Operator Ricky Burleson for helping to save two children and their mother from an apartment fire in Southwest Houston . In a panic, the mother threw her two children out the window to Burleson and then jumped herself.

Firefighter/EMT Javier Benevidez for helping to rescue a fellow firefighter from a burning house fire. Benevidez was assigned to Ambulance 39 riding in charge of patient care. With no firefighting gear or air pack, Benevidez quickly entered the home and drug the Firefighter to safety.